

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The *2001 Comprehensive Plan Update* continues a strong tradition of planning and growth management for Lexington-Fayette County. The *2001 Plan Update* continues to reinforce and support the Urban Service Area (USA) concept, a concept that has protected Fayette County from uncontrolled growth since 1958, by reiterating the need for protection of the county's prime agricultural lands, horse farms and scenic landscapes, as well as by identifying areas where future growth could most economically and feasibly occur. This plan is based on the input, review and refinement from a variety of people, including a broad based citizen input process, the Planning Commission, the Urban County Council, Fayette County residents via public hearings, the Division of Planning, and other Urban County Government staff. The planning process lasted approximately 22 months. The adopted products of the *2001 Comprehensive Plan Update* include the following:

- The plan text;
- The 3000' scale Land Use Plan Map, depicting future land use for the entire county, including the Rural Service area; and
- Four 1000' scale maps, which depict future land use within the Urban Service Area boundary (three are required to see the entire USA; the fourth overlaps and depicts the planning area inside New Circle Road).

The 600' scale Sector Land Use Plan Maps and Rural Activity Center Land Use Maps will be available on a custom request basis.

The Goals and Objectives were adopted by the Urban County Council in December 2000. The Land Use Element and accompanying maps were adopted by the Planning Commission on April 30, 2001 and have been in use for future land use and zoning decisions since that time. The *Plan Update* in its entirety was adopted December 13, 2001.



## 1.1 PURPOSE OF PLAN

A Comprehensive Plan is a document prepared to help guide the future growth and development of a community. Lexington and Fayette County have a long history of land use planning throughout the urban and rural areas of the County. The first Fayette County Planning and Zoning Commission was created in 1928 by City Charter. The first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1931. The current Lexington-Fayette Urban County Planning Commission was created by charter under the merged form of government in 1974. Since the formation of this Commission, Comprehensive Plans have been adopted in 1980, 1988, and 1996. In light of the recent 2000 Census effort, the *2001 Comprehensive Plan Update* is being considered a comparatively minor update to build upon ongoing efforts related to implementing the *1996 Plan*. Nonetheless, a comprehensive plan needs to comply with state and local requirements and to be all of the following:

**Comprehensive** - A plan that covers all geographic parts of a community and all activities that affect physical development.

**General** - A plan that summarizes policies, proposals and provides flexibility where appropriate.

**Long Range** - A plan that strives to present a vision of the future of the community. While addressing short-term issues and problems, its main function is to look beyond current conditions to those desired 20 years from now.

A comprehensive plan is designed to be used by all decision makers, both public and private. In so doing, a plan reflects the expressed desires of the community, serves as a guide to decision-making (i.e., zone changes and development plans), and outlines governmental strategies that can be employed to accomplish the various components of this plan.

In order to be effective, a comprehensive plan should also be reviewed and evaluated every five years to insure that it still guides the community in the most appropriate direction. This *Plan Update* is the result of the efforts of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Planning Commission to review, reevaluate, and update the 1996 *Comprehensive Plan*, incorporating the *Rural Land Management Plan (RLMP)* and *Expansion Area Master Plan (EAMP)* by reference, and incorporating some of these new concepts into this document. Once adopted, it is imperative to continue to periodically review, revise, and update all Plans to ensure their continued relevance to the community.

### 1.2 LEXINGTON-FAYETTE COUNTY'S PLANNING HISTORY

Lexington-Fayette County is located in the heart of the Bluegrass region of Central Kentucky. Lexington is the center of the region's economic, educational, health and cultural activities. Surrounding the urban area, scenic vistas of expansive farmland and horse farms, gently rolling hills, and slow meandering streams characterize the countryside. Lexington-Fayette County measures 285 square miles, with a developing urban core of 85 square miles, and is surrounded by 200 square miles of rural land.

Lexington has grown over the years — from a small cabin constructed in 1775 by William McConnell along Town Branch, to the thriving primary urban center of Central Kentucky that it is today. In 1781, the Virginia Legislature ratified Lexington's first town plat, which covered 710 acres of land laid out in a gridiron street pattern, with one-half acre urban lots and five-acre rural lots. The urban settlement's centrally located town commons provided open space for meetings, markets and recreation, while protecting the town's water supply. Horse racing on the commons was an early indication that Lexington would become the "Horse Capital of the World".

In 1792, when Kentucky became the 15th state of the Union by separating from Virginia, Lexington was already the state's largest city and one of the leading manufacturing centers in the west. By the 1880s, with numerous public buildings, including a university and a public library, as well as hundreds of business establishments, Lexington was commonly referred to as the "Athens of the West" and was the most elegant and fashionable city west of the Alleghenies. Transylvania University was training many of the nation's leaders and promoting educational and cultural activities, while town trustees were initiating such public improvements as paving streets and sidewalks with brick, expanding the town's water supply, and installing street lighting. In 1832, Lexington was

incorporated as a city by the Kentucky Legislature. Throughout this period of growth, Lexington was fortunate to have had prudent, insightful planning.

Lexington's evolution from a colonial town to a modern urban community has relied on its rich tradition of planning to cope with the significant problems posed by rapid urban development, expansion and population growth. During the first decades of this century, city planning emerged as an organized and recognized special discipline, with Lexington playing an active role in this field from the beginning. A significant example of early planning efforts is the Ashland Park Subdivision. Designed by the firm which was founded by the internationally known landscape architect and

planner Frederick Law Olmsted, this subdivision is known for its well maintained, stately homes; intricate street pattern; and landscaped open spaces. Built during the 1920s through the 1940s, the area still retains its beautiful woodland residential character. Several other established neighborhoods are also noted for attractive tree-lined streets and yards, which help define Lexington's special sense of place.

The first Fayette County Planning and Zoning Commission, created in 1928 by City Charter, consisted of seven members, including the City Mayor, the Commissioner of Public Works, the County Road Engineer, three appointed members

eight-member City-County Planning Commission, consisting of the City Engineer, County Engineer, three appointed members from the City and three appointed members from the County. This agreement remained in effect until the City and County governments merged on January 1, 1974; however, a citizen member replaced the City Engineer in October 1972, and a citizen member replaced the County Engineer in October 1974.

Under the merged form of government, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Planning Commission was created by charter and was declared the official planning unit of the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government. By October 1974, the Planning Commission consisted entirely of lay members. From this time forward, all vacancies have been filled through a combined effort of a nomination by the Mayor and confirmation by the Council. In 1986, membership on the Planning Commission increased from eight members to its current eleven-member composition.

One of the most significant duties of the Planning Commission is the adoption of a long-range vision and plan for the community, as well as various regulatory documents which guide the development of the area. The first Subdivision Control Regulations were adopted by the Planning and Zoning Commission in 1929, and the first Zoning Ordinance was adopted by the Board of City Commissioners in 1930. This was followed in 1931 by the adoption of the first "Comprehensive Plan" by the City-County Planning and Zoning Commission. All of these documents were prepared by the consulting firm of Ladislav Segoe from Cincinnati. Current state law requires the adoption of the comprehensive plan prior to enactment of regulatory ordinances by a local community.

In 1958 the City-County Planning and Zoning Commission adopted a comprehensive plan amendment that dramatically influenced planning in Lexington. Upon the advice of the city planning consulting firm, Ladislav Segoe, the Commission defined and established the first "Urban Service Area" in the United States.



from the City, and one appointed member from the County. The City Engineer was substituted for the Commissioner of Public Works in 1932, when the Mayor-Commission form of government was replaced by the City Manager form of government.

State legislation changed the composition of the Planning and Zoning Commission from seven to ten members in 1958. The Commission then consisted of the City Manager, City Engineer, County Commissioner, County Road Engineer, three appointed members from the City and three appointed members from the County. This arrangement remained in effect until 1966, when a new agreement between the City and County was signed. The new agreement established an

This concept delineates the location of urban growth by dividing the county into an Urban Service Area, where development is encouraged, and a Rural Service Area, where urban-oriented activities are not permitted. Areas of future growth within the Urban Service Area were identified so that “complex urban services and facilities, public and private, could be developed logically and economically.” In 1991, the American Institute of Certified Planners recognized the “Urban Service Area” of Lexington as a National Historic Planning Landmark. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the city began to develop detailed neighborhood area plans for all land in the Urban Service Area (Map 1.1). Detailed economic and demographic projections were prepared, as were plans for expansion of public and private facilities throughout the Urban Service Area.

The *1980 Comprehensive Plan* focused on the evolving perspective of the growth management process as a tool to guide and coordinate the many public and private development activities that impact the community’s urban fabric. Lexington-Fayette County has long been aware of the problems associated with uncontrolled sprawl development, particularly with regard to the potentially devastating effects of urban growth on valuable agricultural, horse farm, natural, cultural, and scenic resources. Looking toward the future of Lexington-Fayette County from 1980 to 2000, the community formulated a Growth Planning System to accommodate the projected population, while simultaneously preventing sprawl and maintaining horse farms, agricultural lands and environmentally sensitive areas.

The *1988 Comprehensive Plan* provided direction to shape the growth, maintenance and redevelopment of the community. The plan refinements first focused upon the overall growth projection for Lexington and confirmed the adequacy of land within the Urban Service Area to serve future needs. It also refined policies and strategies to influence the character of future

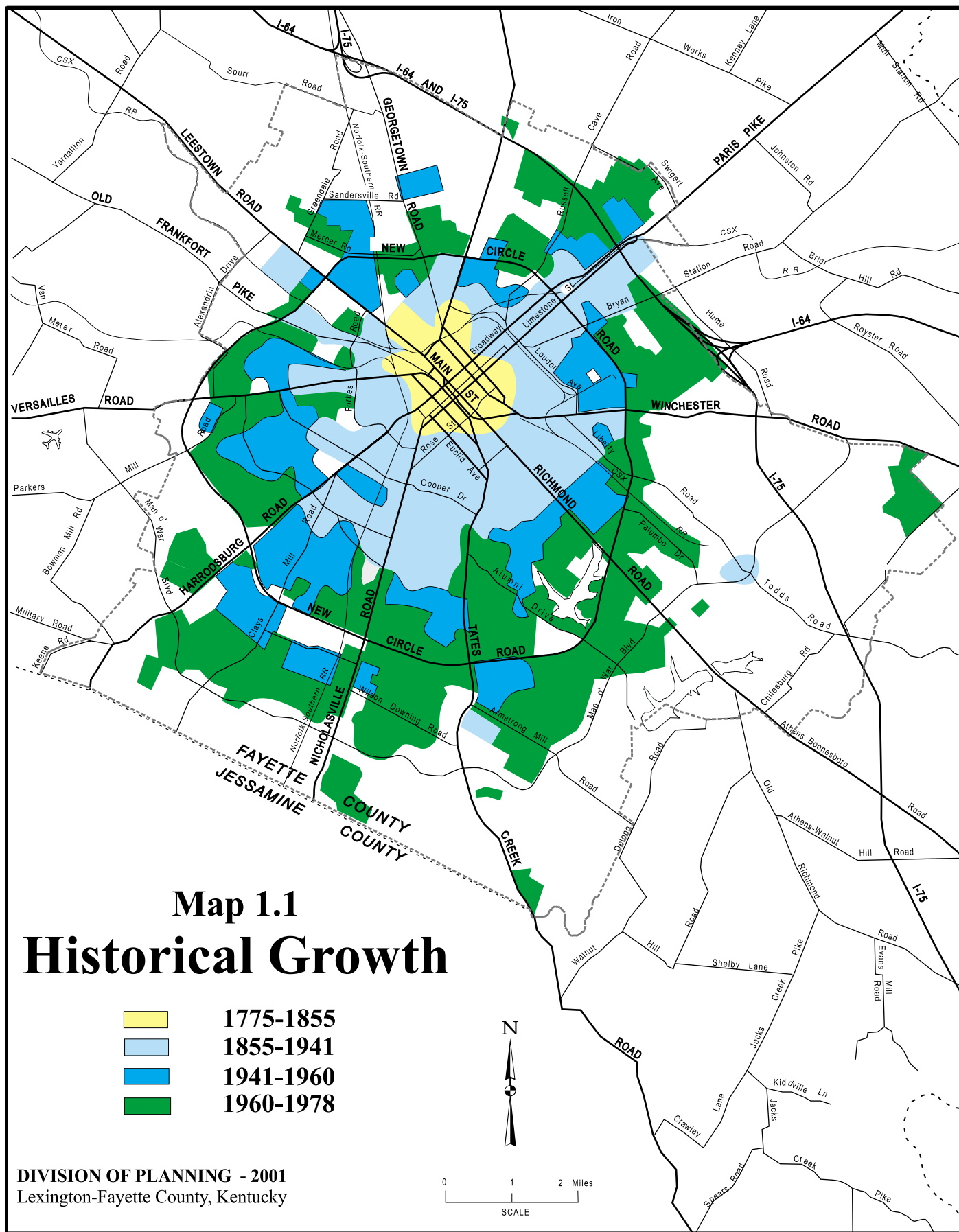
development and redevelopment, and updated specific land use and public facility plans to guide Lexington’s vision of the future.

Again in 1996, the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government was on the cutting edge of land use planning. During the preparation of the *1996 Comprehensive Plan*, new concepts for the Urban County emerged. The *Expansion Area Master Plan (EAMP)* was developed in response to the development pressures experienced by the community and the resultant expansion of the Urban Service Area boundary. The detailed *EAMP* is intended to provide lands for development and conservation in the designated planning areas. Density and design criteria for housing, town center oriented shopping areas, public facilities, infrastructure, boulevards, greenways and open space were defined for each of the Expansion Areas in order to create livable, cost effective, aesthetic, safe and travel efficient neighborhoods with a clear sense of community identity.

The combined process of developing the *1996 Comprehensive Plan* and the *EAMP* made the community aware of the necessity of looking at the County as a whole. These two planning efforts took place in tandem with the development of a parallel *Rural Service Area Land Management Plan (RLMP)*, which includes a strategy to define areas in the County appropriate for development and areas to be preserved in perpetuity. Planning and preservation of the Bluegrass cultural landscape were strengthened through these efforts and have continued to help achieve the community’s vision as the necessary implementation tools have been enacted.

While being considered a minor update, the *2001 Plan Update* process included a careful review of the policies and strategies set forth in the *1996 Plan* and its amendments. It is also hoped that the *2001 Update* will be a resource document for the community. Toward this end, the *Update* includes an expanded data inventory and analysis section, a detailed community facilities section and a more detailed environmental conditions discussion.





This Page Left Blank Intentionally

### 1.3 THE PLANNING PROCESS AND THE 2001 UPDATE

The general planning process occurs in three stages (Exhibit 1-1). These stages include base study analysis, plan development/recommendations and plan implementation. Contained in each stage are a number of steps that facilitate a community's evolution over time. Since change and development occur regardless of the planning process, implementation of these steps can be viewed as a vehicle to improve and guide a community's growth. The foundation for the *2001 Comprehensive Plan Update* originates in many past plans, ranging from Lexington's first Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1931 to the most recent Small Area Plans adopted since the *1996 Comprehensive Plan*. All information contained in the *1996 Plan* was reviewed and refined, as appropriate, to reflect changes in conditions and attitudes since 1996.

The base study stage includes the identification of community needs and the data and issue analysis. The first step in the development of a plan for a community is the identification and assessment of the community's needs. Even though a great deal may already be known regarding the direction the community should take, planning has historically been based on democratic principles. Provisions

for citizen input are maximized through a formalized public participation process to explore community issues and needs. Toward this end, a series of four public meetings were held in February 2000. The purpose of these meetings was both to give citizens an opportunity to understand the planning process and time frame, and to express issues of concern to their neighborhoods or businesses. This series of kick-off public input meetings focused on four specific topics: Regional Growth & Economic Development Strategies; Neighborhood Planning and Growth Management; Community Facilities; and Transportation. These comments were considered by the Planning Commission when developing the Goals and Objectives, and a summary of the comments received at these meetings is available from the Division of Planning.

This *Plan Update* is considered a minor update to the *1996 Plan*, the *Expansion Area Master Plan (EAMP)*, and the *Rural Service Area Land Management Plan (RLMP)*. For the purposes of this *Update* process, the Planning Commission took the approach of direct community involvement rather than forming a separate Plan Update Committee. Working together, the Planning Commission and staff conducted all plan input meetings. The Commission then drafted the recommendations with the assistance of staff, and in light of comments and data received. In addition to the initial public meetings discussed above, many opportunities for formal and informal public input occurred throughout the planning process. Additionally, approximately every four months, the Division of Planning distributed newsletters to neighborhood associations, Urban County Council, Planning Commission and other agencies, as well as staff and interested residents, to inform these individuals about issues, decisions and scheduled meetings. Each public meeting and public hearing was advertised in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* and on the Government Access television channel.

Other studies that have been conducted for the community are also examined at this time, and the issues they identify are incorporated into this process. Following identification of community needs, a look at existing data serves to confirm the

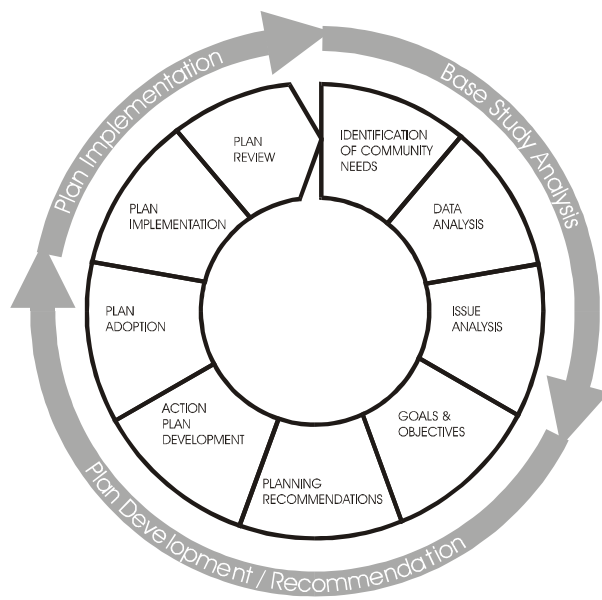


Exhibit 1-1  
Planning Process

issues identified and may also reveal unforeseen problem areas. Chapter 3 of this *Plan Update* contains this Data Inventory and Analysis and includes a compilation and analysis of relevant data related to demographic, housing, economic, land use, historic and environmental categories. Data and needs related to community facilities and transportation are also considered at this stage. Data related to these areas of study are found in Chapters 7 (Community Facilities) and 8 (Transportation). A new chapter added to this *Plan Update*, entitled Environmental Framework (Chapter 4), includes an overview of numerous environmentally related plans and programs that may impact future land use decisions.

The process of integrating community needs and perceptions with the facts and figures from the data is the issue analysis step of the planning process. Goals and Objectives naturally develop once the issues have been fully examined and researched. The Planning Commission utilized the initial public input, needs, data and issues analysis steps of this plan development to carefully review the *1996 Comprehensive Plan's* Goals and Objectives. Based on this review, the Commission proposed reorganization of the Goals and modification to both Goals and Objectives that they deemed appropriate for the *2001 Plan Update*. The 2001 Goals and Objectives were adopted by the Planning Commission on August 18, 2000 and subsequently by the Urban County Council on December 14, 2000.

The adoption of the Goals and Objectives is the first formal step in the plan development/recommendation stage. The state-enabling legislation related to local land use planning, KRS 100, requires three primary elements containing plan recommendations based on the adopted Goals and Objectives. These include land use, community facilities and transportation. As the Goals and Objectives were being finalized and adopted, efforts on the Land Use Element were begun in Fall 2000.

Public input into the Land Use Element took place over a series of 15 working meetings, Planning Commission work sessions, public meetings and/or public hearings that took place between October 2000 and April 2001. These meetings included four public input meetings held at public library branches throughout the community to give people an opportunity to focus on land use issues in their neighborhoods and parts of town. A portion of the Land Use Element text and the final future land use maps were adopted by the Planning Commission on April 30, 2001, upon completion of the public hearing.

The summer of 2001 was spent reviewing, revising and drafting recommendations related to community facilities and transportation, as well as developing the accompanying text and implementation chapter of the *2001 Plan Update*. Three parallel planning efforts (*Royal Spring Wellhead Protection Plan*, *Greenway Master Plan* and the *Infill and Redevelopment Plan*) are incorporated into this *Plan Update* by reference. Chapter 5, Plan Development, and Chapter 6, Land Use Element, contain discussion of the development of the *2001 Plan Update* and the Plan's land use recommendations. These recommendations take the form of both text and maps, and these must be used in conjunction with each other.

Following the adoption of the complete *2001 Plan Update*, implementation of the Plan returns the process full circle. With each revolution of the cycle, the community ideally becomes more sophisticated in its evolution, attaining higher standards of urban and rural living. Chapter 9 discusses strategies for implementing the Plan elements and amendments. These strategies may include zoning and subdivision processing and text amendments, further planning studies and coordination activities.

The *2001 Plan Update* effort took approximately 22 months to complete. The final *2001 Plan Update* text and related maps was adopted on December 13, 2001.



## 1.4 SMART GROWTH AND LEXINGTON'S NEW WAY OF PLAN- NING

The state and the nation are abuzz with interest in the concepts of “Smart Growth” as an alternative to suburban sprawl and out-of-control growth. Lexington-Fayette County has received national recognition as the forerunner in one of these basic Smart Growth concepts, the Urban Service Area (USA) boundary. One of the basic tenets of the Smart Growth movement is the logical and thoughtful relationship between future urban growth and the provision of required infrastructure services. Fayette County’s USA boundary has been based on this critical relationship between growth and urban services since 1958. Additionally, in the early 1990s, when it became apparent that the historical 10-acre minimum in the rural areas of the County was no longer a deterrent to rural residential land absorption, the community undertook a new look at growth management strategies in the rural areas. This resulted in the preparation and adoption of the *Rural Land Management Plan* and the new 40-acre minimum lot size in the rural areas of the County, linked to a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. Lexington-Fayette County’s plans are helpful to other communities throughout the Commonwealth; and in 2001, Governor Patton established a Smart Growth Task Force to study this concept for the entire Commonwealth. Lexington-Fayette County should continue to take a proactive stance in this planning arena and should carefully examine other new, potentially relevant ideas that come out of the Smart Growth movement’s research and analysis for local relevance and applicability.

Additionally, the *1996 Comprehensive Plan* included a call for a “new way of planning” in Lexington-Fayette County. This new way of planning resulted in the development of a county-wide land capability map, as well as the adoption of the *Expansion Area Master Plan* and the *Rural Land Management Plan* and the preparation and adoption of the implementing ordinances and regulations necessary to implement the new ideas included in these plans. In addition to the tasks

prescribed in the *1996 Plan* to be completed by the Commission’s consultant, the “new way of planning” was intended to initiate a continuing planning process to recognize and emphasize the importance of annual efforts to address specific and general planning issues rather than delay the resolution of major planning issues until the next Comprehensive Plan update.

This mind-set has resulted in the preparation and adoption of a number of Small Area Plans, including the *US 27 North Corridor Access Management Plan*; three citizen-based rural corridor planning efforts (Versailles Road, Old Richmond Road, and Winchester Road); and numerous parallel planning efforts. Many of the parallel planning efforts have been adopted as amendments to the *Comprehensive Plan* and function essentially as stand-alone documents. Each of these has a summary in this *Plan Update* and is incorporated as a part of this *Plan Update* by reference. These plans include the *Wellhead Protection Plan*, the *Infill and Redevelopment Plan*, the *Greenway Master Plan*, the *Floodplain Management Plan*, and the *2021 Transportation Plan*, among others. Other planning efforts, which have not yet resulted in adoptable documents, include the Mayor’s recent Downtown Planning efforts; the pending Newtown Pike Extension Small Area Plan; the Limestone/Martin Luther King Corridor Study; and the Red Mile/Angliana Road Small Area Plan.

It is often said of many planning efforts that the plan was well thought out and drafted; but upon adoption, nothing changes. One critical aspect of the “new way of planning” has been the development of implementation strategies and tools in concert with the adoption of recently drafted plans. This philosophy has resulted in the immediate creation of the relevant regulations and other tools necessary to allow the proper development of the Expansion Areas and has resulted in the creation of the Rural Land Management Board and the Fayette County Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. Chapter 9 of this *Plan Update* also includes implementation and monitoring strategies to assist the Commission in continuing this philosophy.

## 2001 Comprehensive Plan

The new way of planning will also lead to a smooth transition into the efforts related to the 2006 Plan. A careful analysis of the 2000 Census data and related population projections will occur in the months following completion of this Plan Update.

These efforts, when combined with an analysis of land absorption rates and future land use needs, will allow a solid working basis for the subsequent planning efforts.

### 1.5 2001 PLAN PRODUCTS

The *2001 Comprehensive Plan Update* consists of several interrelated items adopted by the Planning Commission. The basic elements are:

- The complete plan text referred to as the *2001 Plan Update*;
- A 3000' scale Land Use Plan Map, depicting future land use for the entire county, including the Rural Service area;
- Four 1000' scale maps that depict future land use within the Urban Service Area boundary (three are required to see the entire USA; the fourth overlaps and depicts the planning area inside New Circle Road); and

The 600' scale Sector Land Use Plan Maps and Rural Activity Center Land Use Maps will be available on a custom request basis.

Maps published for sale to the public include the 3000' and 1000' scale maps. The 600' scale sector maps may be plotted and purchased on a case-by-case basis.

The *2001 Plan Update* text is supplemented by minutes that are available as the primary documentation of the Commission's deliberations. The land use maps are also supported by more detailed maps and statistics that inventory existing uses in 2000. The land capability maps developed in 1995 are also available for review, and display existing environmentally sensitive and geologic hazard areas. Complete materials reviewed by the Commission are also on file in the Division of Planning office.

As noted earlier, while the *2001 Comprehensive Plan Update* is comprehensive in nature, it stands together with several other significant documents in setting the planning framework for development in Lexington. Plans such as the *Expansion Area Master Plan (EAMP)*, the *Rural Service Area*

*Land Management Plan (RLMP)*, *Greenway Master Plan*, *Infill and Redevelopment Plan*, *Royal Spring Wellhead Protection Plan*, and recently adopted small area or neighborhood plans remain in effect as detailed plans within the overall context of this new plan, and are incorporated by reference in appropriate locations. The *Year 2025 Transportation Plan* and the *Implementation Plan for Construction of the Outer Perimeter Sewerage Systems* also serve as plans for two of Lexington's most important public facilities: roads and sewers. Appropriate sections of the *2001 Comprehensive Plan Update* summarize and update portions of these plans for the purposes of the *2001 Plan Update*. Whenever possible and appropriate, summaries of such documents are included in the published Comprehensive Plan materials.